

INTRODUCTION

all sides during the next thirty years. The overgenerous Candaules and the too receptive Saul (heroes of the beautiful dramas *Le Roi Candaule* and *SiftS*), together with the protagonist of *Immoraliste*, end tragically because of breaking with conventional morality in their search for self-realization and thus offer a commentary on the doctrine of *Les Nourritures terrestres*. In the philosophic dialogue couched in dramatic form *PMoctete*, the debate between two opposing systems of ethics ends with the victory of self-fulfillment. The heroine of the tale *La Porte étroite* (counterpart of *L'Imrnordiste*, published seven years later, in 1909) illustrates the dangers of the other extreme, renunciation, and her very different form of selfishness leads to just as tragic a conclusion. In *Le Retour de Tenfant prodigue* the prodigal, while admitting his own errors, yet helps his younger brother to escape as he had done. And the attractive young hero of *Les Caves du Vatican*, born and educated without any reference to tradition, yet finds himself the prisoner of a free, unnotivated act he has committed simply to prove his own liberty.

During his period of full maturity between the two wars, Andre Gide constantly returns to the problem of personal freedom: in his memoirs entitled *Si le grain ne meurt*; in his dialogues »on the subject of homosexuality (*Corydon*); in his studies of criminology (*U Affaire*, *Redureau* and *La Sequestree de Poitiers*]; in his drama of *CRdipe*, which enacts the struggle of the individualist against religious authority; and finally—because of all Gide's works it is the best-known abroad—in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*.

The Counterfeiters (as this novel is known in English) is another break with the past. The earlier works of fiction, which most critics would be willing to classify as novels were it not for their author's in-

sistence that they are tales, are all marked by a concentrated action performed by but three or four characters, a personal form of narration by one of the interested individuals, and a distinct simplicity of style. But now, obsessed with the example of Dostoyevsky, whom he had been rereading and analyzing in a series of lectures, Andre Gide set out to write a *summa* of modern life encompassing many plots and simulating the confusion of life itself. 'What should I like this novel to be?' he asks in the *Journals* in 1923 and immediately replies: "A crossroads — a meeting of problems/' This is why, within his own work, he has reserved the designation of novel for this single book. The four principal themes of the novel - the adolescent revolt against the older generation, the decay of the family, the creation of the work of art, and the counterfeit of life to which we all contribute-are interlocked in a contrapuntal composition inspired by Bach's *Art of the Fugue*.

All the problems raised and stylistic innovations attempted in *Les* occupied Andr  Gide's mind for some time. Of-